

Amy RICHLIN : **Parallel lives: Domitia Lucilla and Cratia, Fronto and Marcus.**

The letter-book of Marcus Cornelius Fronto shows a quadrilateral relationship involving not only Fronto and the young Marcus Aurelius but Fronto's wife Cratia and Marcus's mother Domitia Lucilla. Perhaps, as Marcia commemorated Cremutius Cordus, so it was Fronto and Cratia's daughter Cratia who put the letter-book together, centered as it is on family and emotions rather than on politics. Fronto and Marcus inhabit a kind of closet, in which Domitia Lucilla serves as what Eve Sedgwick called «the omnipotent, unknowing mother»; she dwells in the margins of the letters, especially in the closings, and she and Cratia both feature in letters where Marcus and Fronto express their feelings for each other. The letters also attest to a friendship between the two women, although it seems to have ended when the relationship between Marcus and Fronto cooled off. Could this relationship fall into Judith Bennett's category of the «lesbian-like»? The historical evidence for the lives of these two women is reconsidered, and the now standard account of Cratia is challenged on several points: her name might as well be «Gratia» as «Cratia», nor does either necessarily mean she was «Greek», much less from a prominent family from Ephesus; the possible date of her marriage to Fronto and her age at marriage must be revised; the Sorrento inscription might be hers rather than her daughter's, nor need it be funerary, nor need it have come from Fronto's house, nor does it prove the location of Fronto's house. The salient fact of Cratia's life is her loss of five children in infancy; she may well have come from the circle of families tied to Fronto's in North Africa, and her family may have been connected to that of Domitia Lucilla through the brick industry. Domitia Lucilla, much better known, contrasts with her (much younger?) friend on all points – power, success in childbearing, family – but had her own problems within the house of the Caesars.

**Mots-clés :**

M. Cornelius Fronto – Marcus Aurelius Antoninus – Domitia Lucilla – Cratia – epistolography – Eve Sedgwick – lesbian-like – women's friendships – Augustae – prosopography – biography